

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Irma P. Hall

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hall, Irma P., 1935-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall,
Dates:	March 12, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:35).
Abstract:	Actress Irma P. Hall (1935 -) starred in film and television, and founded the African American Repertory Theater in DeSoto, Texas. Hall was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 12, 2008, in Dallas, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_045
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Stage and film actress Irma P. Hall was born Irma Dolores Player on June 3, 1935, in Beaumont, Texas. In 1942, her family moved to the South Side of Chicago, Illinois where she was raised. Hall was introduced to the entertainment industry at the age of seven when her father, a jazz musician, began to take her with him when performing at clubs and local events. After graduating from high school, Hall went on to attend Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa where she was selected for her first acting role in a theatrical production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Afterwards, she transferred to Texas College in Tyler, Texas and pursued her B.A. degree in foreign language education with a focus in French and Spanish.

Hall taught in the Dallas, Texas school system for twenty years until she was discovered by actor and director Raymond St. Jacques. She was performing at a poetry reading when he offered her a role in one of his films, *Book of Numbers* (1973). In 1972, Hall co-founded the Dallas Minority Repertory Theatre and starred in a production of *Happy Endings*. After starring in several more productions, Hall realized her calling as an actress and officially retired from teaching in 1984. When her mother fell ill, Hall took a leave from acting and moved back to Chicago. After her mother's death in 1987, Hall returned to acting, starring in numerous stage productions such as *Member of the Wedding*, *Black Girl*, and *Steppin' Out*. For the Dallas Minority Repertory Theatre, she wrote a play, *Gentle Fire* which was based on her poetry. In 1996, Hall was featured alongside Robert Duvall and James Earl Jones in the film *A Family Thing*. Her performance won her Best Supporting Actress Awards from the Chicago Film Critics Association and the Kansas City Film Critics Circle. She went on to star in several films including *Nothing to Lose* (1997), *Soul Food* (1997) and *Beloved* (1998). In 2000, Hall starred in the revival of the Lorraine Hansberry play *A Raisin in the Sun*. Later, in 2004, Hall appeared in the films *The Ladykillers* and *Collateral*. She was also cast in the 2008 Tyler Perry film, *Meet the Browns*.

Hall has been nominated and has received several awards for her acting including a NAACP Image Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Soul Food*. In 2004, she won the prestigious *Prix du Jury* from Cannes Film Festival for her performance in the *The Ladykillers* while she was still recovering from a devastating car accident.

Since then she has been inducted into the Texas Film Hall of Fame and has opened the African American Repertory Theatre in DeSoto, Texas so she can share her knowledge with and train the new generation of black actors.

Irma P. Hall was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 12, 2008

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Irma P. Hall was conducted by Denise Gines on March 12, 2008, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Actress Irma P. Hall (1935 -) starred in film and television, and founded the African American Repertory Theater in DeSoto, Texas.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Hall, Irma P., 1935-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hall, Irma P., 1935- --Interviews

African American actresses--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Actress

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall, March 12, 2008. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall, Section A2008_045_001_001, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Irma P. Hall was born on June 3, 1935 in Beaumont, Texas to Josephine Thomas Player and Samuel Player V. Her maternal grandfather, Alex Thomas, came from a family of blacksmiths in Louisiana, and worked as a railroad tracklayer. Her maternal grandmother, Mary Thomas, was born in Timpson, Texas, and became a domestic. They raised a large, close-knit family in Tyler, Texas, including Hall's mother, who was born in 1915. Hall's paternal great-grandparents moved from Louisiana to Galveston, Texas, where her paternal great-grandfather, Robert T. Willis, owned the Willis and Hebert Undertakers and Embalmers funeral home. Her paternal grandmother was a music teacher in Shreveport, Louisiana, where Hall's father was born. His mother, Carrie Beatrice Willis, encouraged his interest in the saxophone; and his father, auto garage owner Samuel Player IV, trained him as a mechanic. When Hall was young, she played games like hopscotch and mumbly peg, and her maternal grandmother taught her to quilt.

African American parents--Texas.

African American families--Southern States.

African American mothers--Texas.

African Americans--Education--Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall, Section A2008_045_001_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Irma P. Hall's paternal grandmother, Carrie Beatrice Willis, graduated from Wiley University in Marshall, Texas. Hall's father, Samuel Player V, attended Texas College in Tyler, Texas, where he played football, and formed the Texas College Collegians jazz orchestra. During this time, he also met Hall's mother, Josephine Thomas Player, who was a high school student. In 1934, they married in secret, so that her father could retain his scholarship. Hall was born in Beaumont, Texas, where she began her education at Carroll Street Elementary School at three years old. When her teachers discovered her age, they prevented her from continuing her education until she reached the age of six years old. When Hall was young, her parents moved to Chicago, Illinois, where her father joined Milton Larkin and His Orchestra at the Rhumboogie Café, and her mother worked as a domestic. Hall resided with her relatives in Tyler, Texas, and frequently visited Chicago.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Texas.

African American families--Texas.

African American parents--Texas.

African American couples--Texas.

African American children.

Discrimination against African Americans--Illinois--Chicago.

Migration, Internal--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall, Section A2008_045_001_003, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Irma P. Hall grew up in the community of Tyler, Texas, while her parents lived in Chicago, Illinois. She often traveled by train to visit them; and, during one trip, was paid to sing by the other passengers. Eventually, Hall moved into her parents' small apartment on Chicago's South Side, where her mother found work at Michael Reese Hospital, and her father performed at the Rhumboogie Café. Due to her father's connections, Hall was introduced to renowned musicians like trumpeter Louis Armstrong and singer Billie Holiday. During World War II, her father's musical group disbanded, and he began working for The Hertz Corporation. In Chicago, Hall attended Corpus Christi Elementary School. She also aspired to be a chorus girl, and took dance lessons in

Washington Park. Later, she learned African dance, played the piano and enrolled in a program for gifted children at Loyola University Chicago. Upon graduating from Corpus Christi High School, Hall received a scholarship to Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa.

African American Catholics.

African American children--Illinois--Chicago.

African American children--Education (Elementary)--Illinois--Chicago.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Iowa--Sioux City.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Texas--Tyler.

African American parents.

Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall, Section A2008_045_001_004, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Irma P. Hall lived with her parents on the South Side of Chicago, where she belonged to the Bud Billiken Club, and delivered the Chicago Defender. Hall also met artists like poet Gwendolyn Brooks, who encouraged her to write. Upon graduating from Corpus Christi High School, she studied for two years at Briar Cliff College in Sioux City, Iowa, where she performed in 'Amahl and the Night Visitors.' Then, she transferred to Texas College in Tyler, Texas, where she majored in French and education. Although she was initially disinterested in a teaching career, Hall trained at Emmett J. Scott High School in Tyler, Texas, and earned her certification in 1957. She began substitute teaching in Hunt County, Texas, and married Shed William Hall of Greenville, Texas. Hall took leave from teaching while pregnant, and worked as a butcher's apprentice in Amarillo, Texas. She substitute taught until 1963, when she joined the faculty of Franklin D. Roosevelt High School in Dallas, Texas.

Catholic high schools--Illinois--Chicago.

African American teachers--Texas.

African American newspapers--Illinois--Chicago.

African Americans--Marriage.

African American families--Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall, Section A2008_045_001_005, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Irma P. Hall taught at several schools in Dallas, Texas, including Booker T. Washington Technical High School and Sarah Zumwalt Junior High School. During this time, she also reported for the Dallas Express, the city's oldest African American newspaper. Hall was active in the Association of Advancing Artists and Writers, Inc., where she met filmmaker Raymond St. Jacques. Upon hearing Hall read, he offered her a role in his film, 'Book of Numbers.' Hall continued to teach in Dallas, and honed her acting craft at venues like the Theatre Three and Granny's Dinner Theater. She also hosted programs on KCHU Radio. As Hall matured as an actor, she secured roles in films like 'Square Dance' and 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'; served as director of the Dallas Minority Repertory Theater; and wrote her own play, 'Gentle Fire.' In 1987, Hall moved to care for her ailing parents in Chicago, Illinois, where she began working with agent Harrise Davidson. In 1996, Hall starred in the film 'A Family Thing.'

African American teachers--Texas--Dallas.

Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963--Assassination.

St. Jacques, Raymond, 1930-.

African American actresses.

Brooks, Avery.

African American newspapers--Texas--Dallas.

Video Oral History Interview with Irma P. Hall, Section A2008_045_001_006, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Irma P. Hall acted on the stage and screen throughout the 1990s and 2000s. She had roles in such productions as 'A Family Thing,' 'Steel,' 'Mo' Money,' 'A Raisin in the Sun,' 'Collateral' and 'The Ladykillers.' Hall also acted alongside Cicely Tyson, Don Cheadle and Mekhi Phifer in the Emmy Award winning television film, 'A Lesson Before Dying.' For her performance in 'Soul Food,' Hall received further public attention, as well as the NAACP Image Award. At the time of the interview, her acting projects included Kenny Golde's film 'Uncross the Stars,' and Tyler Perry's 'Meet the Browns.' Hall had one daughter, Irma Crayton Hall, who taught special education after serving in the U.S. Navy for twenty-one years. Hall's son, Shed William Hall, Jr., passed away in 2002. She also had two grandchildren. Hall reflects upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the interview by sharing a message to future generations.

African American actresses.

African Americans in motion pictures.

Soul food (Motion picture).

Cannes Film Festival.

African American families.

African American theater--Texas.

African Americans--Religion.

Hanks, Tom.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Awards.